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UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 001011

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WIDE SUPPORT FOR EU ACCESSION TALKS WITH TURKEY

REF: (A) BRATISLAVA 00909

(B) BRATISLAVA 00923

11. (U) Summary. The vast majority of Slovak political parties have expressed support for beginning EU-accession talks with Turkey. However, they caution that beginning talks is not a guarantee of support for joining the EU; Turkey must fully meet all the political and economic requirements for membership. One government coalition party, the Christian Democratic Party (KDH), has vocally opposed opening EU accession talks with Turkey. A recent constitutional amendment gives parliament the final authority to make decisions on Slovakia's positions within the EU. Deciding how Slovakia will vote in December on Turkish EU-accession talks is the first test case of the new law. End Summary.

#### Dzurinda Gets Support from Opposition

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12. (U) True to his word, after promising in a 10/1 press conference at his Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) party's headquarters to begin a dialogue among political parties on Turkish EU accession (ref A), Prime Minister Dzurinda did just that. He secured support for setting a firm date to begin talks with Turkey from the co-governing Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) and Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO), and from the two major opposition parties, Smer and the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). All were careful to say that beginning talks was not a guarantee that Turkey would be admitted to the EU; it must first fulfill all the conditions for membership. HZDS Chairman Vladimir Meciar stated, "If EU entry talks begin, they will consist of several years of political hang-ups, but it is better that they start than not at all." Smer's chairman Robert Fico indicated his party's support for beginning negotiations did not automatically presume future support of Turkey's membership in the union.

13. (U) Smaller parties in Parliament, such as the People's Union (LU) and the Free Forum (FF), also agreed on the need to start entry talks with Turkey. President Gasparovic commented that Turkey should be admitted to the European Union after its long wait. The president said, "Telling Turkey 'no' would not be acceptable from a political or civil view."

#### KDH Chooses God Over Politics

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14. (U) Of the four governing parties, only the KDH remains resolutely opposed to opening talks. KDH Chairman Pavol Hrusovsky recently stated on national TV that his party objects to talks because of unresolved issues, such as Cyprus, human rights violations, and maintaining standard democratic practices throughout the EU. As a strong Catholic-based party, KDH has also maintained that the EU should remain solely a Christian community. The Slovak Conference of Catholic Bishops said Turkey has not met the criteria for entering the EU and "lacks the basic roots of Europe, which are Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Christianity."

15. (SBU) SDKU MP Roman Vavrik told emboffs 11/2 that KDH sought support from opposition parties for its stance against accession talks and against Slovakia signing the EU constitution. However, only the KDH and the Communist Party (KSS) oppose these two key foreign policies, which the vast majority of Slovak politicians see as crucial for Slovakia's prosperity and security. SMK MP Lajos Ladanyi summarized the prevailing view when he told emboffs that cutting off Turkey's option to join the EU could send the country in the direction of extremism and Islamic fundamentalism.

#### Parliament's Role

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16. (U) Political party dialogue was crucial to this issue because parliament will decide what stance the GOS will take in December. Based on an amendment to the Slovak Constitution effective August 1, 2004, parliamentary decisions on EU-related issues are binding for the

government. The issue of opening accession talks with Turkey is the first test of this process. Parliament started the ball rolling by requesting that the MFA prepare a report regarding Slovakia's stance on opening EU accession talks with Turkey.

17. (SBU) The chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for EU Affairs, Tibor Mikus (HZDS), told poloffs 10/19 that committee members thought the report was incomplete and lacked a clear position. On October 20, the Committee

recommended postponing the parliamentary discussion on this topic until December and requested a new MFA report due in late November. However, Mikus also told poloffs that Slovakia is a little player in the EU, and it should watch and listen carefully, indicating the final decision would not be anti-Turkey.

Comment

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18. (SBU) The GOS will likely flow with the prevailing stream in the EU regarding Turkey. The new amendment to the constitution has provided a valuable tool for coalition parties to transfer this issue to parliament so that it doesn't create too much tension in the cabinet. We can expect heated parliamentary debate from the KDH, but the overwhelming majority of coalition and opposition parties agree on the position "open talks -yes, accession - maybe."

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